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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to give third-grade teachers a way to incorporate into the standard school day ongoing assessment techniques. The teachers used portfolios of the 140 children's work as an important, tangible and readily accessible record. The development and presentation of eight monthly workshops and ongoing classroom demonstration and support of portfolios addressed the individual child's needs in a personal, language arts integrated manner, needs which stemmed from community cultural differences and linguistic orientation. The practicum provided the teacher with a way to establish and manage a classroom climate for continuous portfolio assessment approach and cooperative/collaborative Writing to Learn Centers. Lesson plans were formulated from writing activities related to real purposes, interests, motivation, and needs of the children, connecting school, home, and community. Interactive family assignments, parent/child/homework workshops and ongoing parent/teacher/child conferences were instituted to assist children and parents with the purposes and functions of varied forms of written communication. The practicum succeeded in providing an effective continuous assessment approach, as a positive supplement to the current reporting system. As a result of the workshop programs supplementing the writing curricula and the ongoing child/teacher conference time, there was a marked increase in the children's enthusiasm, confidence, and writing output. The children also demonstrated much improvement in the quality of their writing, and the parents became active participants in their children's writing development. Contains 92 references and five tables of data. (RS)

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ED 369 079

Using a Continuous Assessment Approach to Enhance Third Grade Children's Writing Abilities

by

Rhoda Orenstein

Cluster XXXIX

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Susanne K. DeHardt, Ed.D.
Susanne K. DeHardt, Ed.D.

Long Beach, California
Address

December 16, 1993
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Rhoda Orenstein under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

February 14, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Ann E. Fordham
Ann E. Fordham, Ed.D., Advisor

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Terri Bolding, Team Teacher
Susanne K. DeHardt, Verifier
The targeted third grade children,
their parents and their teachers
The writer's family

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS iv
TABLES OF RESULTS v
ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION
Description of Work Setting and Community 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role 3

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM
Problem Description 4
Problem Documentation 7
Causative Analysis 9
Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 11

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS
Goals and Expectation 15
Expected Outcomes 15
Measurement of Outcomes 17

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY
Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions 20
Description of Selected Solutions 27
Report of Actions Taken 35

V RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Results 63
Summary of Results 78
Conclusions 79
Recommendations 83
Dissemination Plans 84

REFERENCES 86

TABLES OF RESULTS

Page

A Summary of Effective Assessment Techniques.....67

Daily Child/Teacher Conferences.....69

Parent Teacher Conferences.....72

Portfolio Review.....75

Children's Writing Interest Survey.....77

ABSTRACT

Using a Continuous Assessment Approach to Enhance Third Grade Children's Writing Abilities; Orenstein, Rhoda D., 1993: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Writing Processes / Early Literacy Development / Literacy Strategies / Literacy Behaviors / Whole Language / Natural Approach / Thematic Approach /At Risk and Disadvantaged Students / Learning Styles / Parent Conferences / Collaborative / Cooperative Learning / Learning Disabilities / Technology / Qualitative / Quantitative Evaluations / Authentic Assessment / Portfolios / Performance Based Assessment.

The teachers of the target population lacked a way to measure and communicate on an ongoing basis the writing progress, capabilities, and potential concurrent with instructional needs to both children and parents. The goal was to give the teachers a way to incorporate into the standard school day ongoing assessment techniques. The teachers used portfolios of the children's work as an important, tangible and readily accessible record.

The development and presentation of eight monthly workshops and ongoing classroom demonstration and support of portfolios by the writer addressed the individual child's needs in a personal, language arts integrated manner, needs which stemmed from community cultural differences and linguistic orientation. The practicum provided the teacher with a way to establish and manage a classroom climate for continuous portfolio assessment approach and cooperative / collaborative Writing To Learn Centers. Lesson plans were formulated from writing activities related to real purposes, interests, motivation and needs of the children, connecting school, home and community. The writer instituted interactive family assignments, parent/child/homework workshops and ongoing parent/teacher/child conferences to assist children and parents with the purposes and functions of varied forms of written communication.

It was concluded that the practicum succeeded in providing an effective continuous assessment approach, as a positive supplement to the current reporting system. As a result of the workshop programs supplementing the writing curricula and the ongoing child/teacher conference time, there was a marked increase in the children's enthusiasm, confidence, and writing output. The children also demonstrated much improvement in the quality of their writing. Finally, the practicum enabled the parents to become active participants in their children's writing development.

Permission Statement

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

The geographic setting of the Kindergarten to Grade Five elementary school is a community with a population of approximately 400,000. More than 75,000 youths and adults are enrolled in the district's 82 schools. This city has witnessed a serious decline in manufacturing and industrial employment, while at the same time experiencing a sharp increase in an unskilled immigrant population. City and state resources struggle to provide affordable housing, adequate health care and quality education for the city's residents.

The socio-economic setting of the Kindergarten through Grade Five elementary school is a multi-racial, suburban neighborhood in transition, moving from stable, owner occupied single family homes to new, rental apartment complexes, often housing multiple or extended families together in small one or two bedroom apartments. Half of the school population comes from the surrounding neighborhood, while the other half is bused from overcrowded schools in the central city area of the school district.

The families of the students are primarily poor, unskilled workers of limited English proficiency, who have recently emigrated to the Untied States from Asian and Hispanic countries, as well as from the Philippines, India and Iran. A total of 819 students attend this school; 314 qualify as Chapter I participants. This federally funded program began in September 1990. The budget allowed for a full time facilitator, hired for management of Chapter I funds, and support people such as nurse, counselor, speech specialist, special education advisor, community worker, and transportation worker, all of whom were part-time at this school site.

The target population consisted of 140 third grade children. Seventy-eight of which had limited English proficiency. Twenty-two of these children were attending school for the first time; twenty-seven of them attended an English-as-a-Second Language Center for part of the school year. Based upon the writer's observation, the children were inexperienced socially in a school setting and had limited literacy materials available at home. The 82 boys and 58 girls teamed with other third graders for social studies, physical education and health and safety programs; they teamed with second graders for music. Sixteen of the children were identified as learning disabled.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is a participating member of the school staff and Parent and Teacher Association; both as an instructor/leader and speaker/moderator. The assignment for this year is Teacher, Third Grade, in a self-contained classroom. Responsibilities involve planning and implementing the fourteen subjects of the state and district curriculum of Educational Programs, Third Grade.

The writer is a state credentialed teacher for grades Kindergarten through Grade Twelve and community colleges, and is a district mentor teacher trained in the district programs Essential Elements of Instruction, Classroom Management and Curriculum Development. As a district mentor teacher, the writer develops specific strategies in such areas as motivation, lesson planning, and behavioral management, to assist new and experienced teachers with implementation of the state and district-mandated curricula.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The community at large perceived test scores on state mandated standardized tests as a reflection of the quality of the public education system. In 1991, the state mandated educational goals in writing and reading for grades Kindergarten through Grade Five and selected a new standardized test to evaluate the educational expectations of the curriculum. The test scores provided limited information regarding a child's writing capabilities and instructional needs to the child, parent or teacher.

At the practicum site, the third grade child's level of achievement in writing was measured against that of all other children through the use of standardized tests, given annually. Standardized, timed tests in written language competency allowed for only one correct response. The district area director, school facilitator and principal directed and monitored student activities designed to improve student scores on the annual standardized test. Teachers followed required schedules and activities that were developed by textbook publishers and selected by

district consultants to satisfy the state writing curriculum and its testing guidelines. Curriculum guides and workshops were developed to provide methods of presentation and evaluation of the state writing curriculum. A non-consumable work pack, consisting of word study skills, skill sheets of language mechanics and objective tests, was specifically developed for such purposes.

Mandated, standardized tests continued to be given despite recommendations against their use in elementary grades by public and private research authorities such as Rapp-Haggard Ruddell (1991), Newmann (1991), Gardner (1983), Cambourne and Turbill (1990). These researchers found that critical thinking, developmental-appropriate tasks and multi-response strategies were lacking in a standardized test.

Torrage (1991) and Bell (1976) noted that in a global, interdependent world, evolving information technologies were transforming the nature of work and altering the way people acquired knowledge. This transformation in turn affected the design and content of the school curriculum and instruction. Methods of instruction which were content- based and which relied on skills such as written language components, repetitive drills and memorization were the main teaching strategies employed to prepare for the standardized test.

Instruction had changed from the presentation of data in factual format only to a focus on developing skills for solving and finding problems, evaluating and synthesizing ideas and creating solutions from

multiple subjects. These skills were not easily evaluated by the state and district standardized tests.

Standardized tests did not effectively assess the progress of a child, where language or cultural differences limited the child's ability to communicate a degree of proficiency in the standardized format. Standardized tests and current instructional methods in the writing curriculum limited children's responses. Children's talents, nuances, lore, background, enthusiasm, perseverance, inventiveness and motivation were not accorded significant weight under the current state and district testing. Based upon the writer's observations, the problem was summarized as follows:

1. Standardized, timed tests in written language competency which allowed for only one correct response were mandated by the state and were given once a year to all third grade students.

2. The quantitative, numerical scores resulting from the standardized tests of specific written language skills provided limited help in communicating the student's progress, talents or learning needs to the student, parents and teachers.

3. Students, parents and instructors lacked a means of assessment through which they could quantify student achievement beyond the narrow focus of standardized tests. They lacked assessment tools to evaluate progress in those cases where a student's lack of English proficiency or unfamiliarity with certain cultural norms placed them in the lower levels of standardized scores. The problem was briefly

stated as follows: The teachers at the practicum site lacked a means of continuing assessment through which they could quantify and communicate third grade children's writing achievements, capabilities, and instructional needs to the children and parents.

Problem Documentation

Achievement scores on standardized tests have proved to be misleading when used as indicators of the writing ability and orientation of the targeted third grade population.

In the spring of 1992, the writer observed third grade students in the target group who had scored at grade level, above grade level and below grade level on the Houghton Mifflin Placement Test (1991). The students devoted significant time to utilizing skill sheets purchased by the district to practice writing skills. The work sheets focused on specific isolated written language skills which were directed toward improvement of scores on the single response format favored by the Houghton Mifflin district and state standardized tests. Through interviews and extended writing skill exercises with the students, the writer found that most students who had scored at or above grade level on the Houghton-Mifflin Placement Test performed poorly and responded poorly to writing ability exercises that demanded an application of their skills in exercises beyond the single answer format.

Recent MAT 6 and CAP scores indicated with greater accuracy the deficiency of the written language skills of the target third grade

students. The median scores on the MAT 6 for total written language in Spring 1992 were in the 28th percentile for the third grade. The third grade CAP scores in written language indicated that one third of the students scored in the bottom quartile. The mere fact that scores were low did not convey the "why" of the problem. The attitude section of the CAP test was a clearer indicator. Student's attitudinal needs identified on the CAP attitude section of the test indicated that 48 percent of the third grade students liked to write "a little" and 21 percent "not at all." Individual interviews given Spring 1992, as a portion of the Writing Interest Survey (Quinn, 1989) confirmed the attitudinal needs findings.

Parents had expressed a desire to understand the relationships between standardized test scores and their child's learning abilities, accomplishments and achievements. This desire was expressed in comments included in the parent section of the Program Quality Review Survey, (State Department of Education, Elementary School Program Quality Review 1992) and through informal interviews during student progress conferences as part of the parent/teacher review. Teachers and administrators at the practicum site indicated on the Program Quality Review Surveys (State Department of Education, Elementary School Program Quality Review 1992) a need for a tangible and meaningful assessment format which would enable them to better communicate to the child and family their learning expectations, provide them with a useful way to improve individual instruction, and generate an ongoing

progress report of the child's growth, development and potential in written communication.

Causative Analysis

Through an analysis of test results, surveys, interviews and a review of children's work, the writer identified several reasons for the lack of alternative forms of assessment and evaluation of children's writing at the practicum site.

Currently, written language resource materials and classroom instruction emphasize achievement as measured by the single correct answer type format of standardized tests. Both teachers and administrators had been accountable to their districts for producing student test scores at a level that provided continued access to public funds. Scores obtained by students on standardized tests were accepted by educational institutions and communities as reliable measures of the academic quality of a school and the effectiveness of its instructional methods.

The school site had not adequately developed, and did not actively employ alternative assessment methods in those instances where language or cultural differences limited a student's ability to demonstrate a degree of proficiency in written communication skills. It was observed that many children lacked proficiency in their native language, as well as in English. Without proficiency in their own language, they were unable to transfer the English vocabulary

contained in the work into a more easily absorbable application in their native tongue. In the classroom, the child observed little purpose in the use of writing, other than to complete the work pack worksheets. In addition, there was limited opportunity in the classroom for the development of the skills of story-telling or conversation. Little time was set aside to encourage a dialogue between students and teacher about homework, classroom activities, or topics of general interest to the students.

Finally, although the district recognized the need for a means to communicate a child's progress and instructional needs, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, it had yet to provide training and materials for teachers, parents or children which utilized familiar and functional events, available within the community, as a useful tool for writing instruction and assessment in the classroom and at home. Current teaching methods did not adequately utilize personality traits and learning styles to stimulate the development of written communication skills. Teachers lacked training in alternative assessment methods that recognized and quantitatively measured qualities such as drive, determination and attitude. Students lacked the necessary learning skill of self-evaluation/self-assessment, experiences in varied contexts and they lacked parents who were trained to understand their child's progress or to assist their child in the development of written communication skills.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Many noted authors had addressed the observed problems created by an instructor's focus on standardized achievement test performance and the lack of adequate methods of assessment. These authors had observed and identified the types of environments necessary for and/or conducive to the development of a child's writing skills, and they had identified specific circumstances under which the development of such skills could be impaired. By researching their work, this writer identified and distilled those things which were lacking in the target population's environment, and attempted to develop a supplemental assessment curriculum which addressed and remedied the limited experiences so as to give the target population an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in the state and district writing curriculum.

The various disciplines and topics researched in the areas of written communication development were writing processes, whole language, theme teaching at-risk and disadvantaged students, qualitative and quantitative evaluations, cognitive strategies, learning styles, authentic assessment, performance based assessment, early literacy development, technology and learning disabilities.

The literature reviewed by the writer acknowledged the existence of the problem, and probable causes of the problem. Ascher (1990) observed that teachers have long accepted the responsibility of classroom writing instruction, but tend to teach such activities only to improve student scores on standardized tests. Carbo, Dunn and Dunn

(1986) and Heath (1987) agreed that the unfortunate result of such methods was that the resulting conformity of the students' work was deemed the measure of success.

Heath (1987) stated that children were deprived of exposure to practical uses of writing and the inherent satisfaction of using the written word to express cultural ideas and personal history. Cambourne and Turbill's (1990) research revealed that instructional conformity excluded, by its nature, a large number of students whose abilities remained undiscovered due to inadequate assessment methods.

The limitations of testing were addressed by Goodman (1986) who noted that in the single response format, the teacher limited the child's natural thought processes by creating an unnatural restriction through limiting answers, while they searched their experiences for meaning to the specific choices offered.

Darling-Hammond and Wise's (1985) work suggested that teachers were led to use a selected format to produce scores rather than cognitive growth and development. This prevented children from using their own strategies. Ghory (1988) suggested that students perceived at risk were limited by the idea that repetition and memorizing were the most beneficial ways to learn in order to perform well on tests. Neill and Medina (1989) stated that the student that fell behind and whose failures were documented by test scores was perceived by others and perceived himself as a failure. This student was unlikely to be motivated to improve, let alone to catch up to his or her peers.

Addressing the need for alternative assessment methodology, Haney and Madaus (1989) contended that the current system of instruction and testing generally served the majority in the classroom and fostered a situation where the language and culturally deprived students were left behind. Gardner (1983), Gardner and Hatch (1989) wrote that our system of instruction and curriculum have forced adult standards and judgement on the students, causing timidity regarding their own writing to supplant the naturally adventurous thoughts of those who wished to express themselves in their own prose. Graves (1983) stressed that many students found it difficult to write because they lacked the opportunity to gain early writing experiences and the confidence that this provided. Herter (1991) noted the limitations fostered by current assessment and contended that writing achievement could be thwarted by reliance on textbook assignments alone and by failure to let children's writing be read by children and by tapping a student's cultural experiences.

The need for adequate instructor training was addressed by Stiggins (1986). According to Stiggins, written testing, utilizing objective, one answer questions which characterized the current method and means that teachers use to evaluate students, had characterized the focus of teacher training. Rapp-Haggard Rudell (1991) studies appeared to be in agreement with Stiggins. In order to assess students' literacy development as related to contemporary societal situations, teachers required special training and additional time

for individual evaluations. Lockwood (1991) pointed out that teachers need to be trained to use continuous assessment to provide feedback to the student, thus gaining a clearer insight about a student's developmental levels.

Gorrell and Trentham (1992) described the role of the teacher in fostering individual student assessment, which allowed the student to more easily understand his/her educational development strengths and needs. Hambelton and Murphy (1991) proposed that on-going assessment of students' work was essential if the teacher was to learn what the individual students knew and how to communicate to them what they needed to optimize their literacy development. Alderman (1990) pointed out the need to assess and communicate to students what they could do on their own as a measure of initiative and responsibility for their learning. Costa (1989) proposed that teachers make decisions on what and when and how to learn, as well as extending this idea into the times when a child could and should assume the responsibility for choices. Dempster (1992) noted that teachers often corrected and evaluated students' work without explaining to the student their strengths and weaknesses. Farr (1991) agreed that continuous assessment of students would help them understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Natriello (1991) criticized the fact that writing expectations and needs had not been part of a student-teacher or student-student plan and proposed that criticism of and by his/her peers could motivate and reinforce the students' efforts.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectation

The following goals and expected outcomes are projected for this practicum. The goals of the writer are (1) to give third grade teachers at the practicum site a means of ongoing assessment through which they can quantify and communicate the target third grade children's writing capability, interest, progress and instructional needs to both the children themselves and to their parents and (2) to enhance the target third grade children's interest and writing abilities so that they may more effectively communicate their thoughts through the use of written language.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the implementation period, all third grade teachers at the practicum site will have attended seven out of eight workshops and will report a gain of a minimum of three or more ways to use a collection of a child's actual work as a means of assessment and instructional planning. The teacher's progress will be measured by

district approved Workshop Evaluation Forms; and a workshop group journal.

By the end of the implementation period, at least four out of five third grade teachers at the practicum site will adopt and utilize a portfolio assessment approach to communicate writing progress and writing instructional needs to a minimum of five or more children each day. Progress in this area will be measured by a district approved writing assessment/instruction checklist, a teacher/child conferencing form and teacher observation reports filed in each child's portfolio.

By the end of the implementation period, at least four out of five third grade teachers at the practicum site will, at least every two months, utilize the child's portfolio of writing projects as a means to communicate to the child's parents the progress of each child and to convey to the parents ongoing instructional plans to address the child's needs for additional development of writing skills, including exercises for both the home and classroom environment. Achievement of this objective will be measured by district approved parent/teacher conference forms, homework checklists, and writing projects filed in each child's portfolio.

By the end of the implementation period, all the third grade teachers at the practicum site will record that all the target third grade children in attendance spent at least 40 minutes a day at the Writing to Learn Classroom Centers; at least seven out of ten children will review and reflect on their respective portfolios with a minimum of one other person each day. Achievement of the objective will be measured by:

completion of a Learning Center sign-in form, a district approved Writing Assessment/Instruction Checklist, and a child's journal filed in each child's portfolio.

By the end of the implementation period, at least eight out of ten target third grade children at the practicum site will select, exhibit and share five or more projects from their writing portfolio, and report a gain in a positive attitude and interest towards writing. Achievement of the objective will be measured by each child's journal, each child's portfolio exhibit at a Writer's Fair, a district approved Writing Interest Survey (Quinn, 1989) and comparison of scores registered on the attitude section of the CAP Test.

Measurement of Outcomes

As previously mentioned, the extent to which these outcomes were achieved were measured by completion of classroom and workshop journals, Writing Center sign-in sheets, workshop evaluation forms, checklists, interviews, teacher/child conferencing forms, Parent/Teacher conference forms, teacher's informal observation notes, writing assessment and instruction forms, and portfolios of children's work maintained by the writer and the classroom teachers of the collected work of the target population. The writer and classroom teachers maintained, monitored and logged the children's portfolios of projects which included (1) dialogue journals, (2) samples of written

work (3) across-the-curriculum reports of projects and events (4) experiment records and (5) homework assignments.

During the interview phase of the documentation period, children expressed a desire to take classroom work and certain materials home to share with family and friends. Each child was given their respective portfolios to take home with them for a given time. The children were encouraged, through suggested exercises, to add to their portfolio dialogue journal documentation of their interactions with family, neighbors and friends. The writer, classroom teacher and child assessed, planned, evaluated and recorded their discussions of written communication projects and assignments in the writing portfolio. The portfolio was available for parent/teacher/child conferences.

At the end of the eight month implementation period, the writer retested the target population with the previously administered Writing Interest Survey (Quinn, 1989) and compared the individual interviews given with the target population Spring 1992.

The workshop format and components, workshop evaluation forms, workshop journal, classroom portfolio environment and children's writing portfolios were evaluated by the school site education consultant, site facilitator, principal and the writer to ascertain the number of children and teachers who met the objectives set forth in the practicum, with the expectation that if at least seven out of ten children of the target population and at least four out of five teachers met the objectives, the writer considered that the practicum had provided the

teachers a means to communicate and quantify third grade children's writing achievements, capabilities, and instructional needs to the children and parents.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The teachers of the third grade target population, as observed by the writer, lacked a means of communicating to children and parents the child's writing progress and written communication potential, concurrent with instructional needs.

Several authors had previously developed and implemented solution strategies and methods which addressed the child's individual abilities, learning styles, personal learning strategies, cultural and language differences and developmental stages.

Wiggins (1990), Valencia, Pearson, Peters, and Wixson (1989), Gardner (1983), Gardner and Hatch (1989) and Rich (1989) recommended a new assessment approach. With the recent shift towards whole language and writing across the curriculum, traditional assessment tools (quantifiable, objective tests) to indicate a child's achievement could be supplemented by a portfolio approach that used children's qualities such as self-motivation, interest, talents, and actual work as realistic assessment tools.

Goodman (1978), Newmann (1991) and Rapp-Haggard Ruddell (1991) proposed new instructional methodology for teachers, essentially that they would institute ongoing, continuous assessments of students' literacy behaviors. Teachers would require training in this technique, which did not rely on standardized testing. They needed to understand not only what was to be taught but how students learned at particular stages in their development. The authors suggested that teachers use the continuous assessment process in the classroom in order to provide each student the environment in which whole-learning and interaction with others could take place. The goal for authors Goodman, Newmann and Rapp-Haggard Ruddell was to discover how the student learned and developed over time.

Emig (1989), Wolf (1989), and Kirst (1991) stated that mandated testing to measure students' literary achievements was unable to fully explain and appreciate the individualism of these students. Students' linguistic and social histories were important factors to consider and understand when assessing students' continuing development and progress in the classroom.

Krest (1990) and Arter (1990) stated that the role of teachers in the evaluation process was to ultimately help the students to evaluate themselves. Palmer (1989) pointed to the advantages in using students' portfolios and their self evaluations of chosen examples in the assessment process.

Wilde (1991) and Harrington (1991) suggested that to be of value, assessment must occur at the time of instruction. Teachers must design procedures for gathering ongoing samples of written communication that gives a child a sense of progress, and the teacher a sense of the child's instructional needs. Writing would serve as the diagnostic tool; daily assignments would be measured by performance and based upon a child's personal history and daily behavior.

Partridge (1990) stated that the measurement of the thought process involved in writing versus memorization could be more readily obtained from a collection of several examples written over a period of time. Paulson and Paulson (1991) believed that a child's writing achievement must include a teacher's ongoing instructional plan and the use of varied measurement techniques with child centered activities, where the expectations and criteria for writing are understood by the child.

Wolf (1989) indicated that portfolio assessment provided a way to examine the writing to learn process in action, where the student enjoyed an opportunity to reflect on his progress and promotes his/her role as a writer. Peters (1988) stated that teachers could help easily discouraged children to accept their writing capabilities. Scheiber (1988) and Shanahan (1991) suggested that teachers trained in a narrative or story-telling technique would give a child the opportunity to write what they had experienced.

Resnick and Resnick (1990) suggested that the teacher needed to find a way to get children to express what they knew through content that was meaningful and purposeful to them. Sawyer (1991) and Weaver (1991) suggested that children discovered relationships to their own experiences as they were guided to think, recall and infer through imitation and imagination at their own critical thinking development. Eldredge (1991) stated that children use critical thinking writing levels, such as sensory, when the child actively participates and describes his/her experiences. Heath (1987) believed that children needed to express their feelings to write without stressing one form of written expression and/or mechanics which are different for different cultures and languages.

Butler (1987) said that a student should be provided with writing experiences which flow from his/her sensitivity to the problem situations developed in their literature and that literature can extend and relate purposes of writing and writing conventions to the student. Goodman, Smith, Meredith and Goodman (1987) believed children would develop their own principles of the conventions of print as they practiced daily reading and writing.

Research by Okech (1987) and Veatch (1991) indicated that a constructive process from within the child linked meaning to prior experiences; the teacher's role was to develop the experiences of the child. Morrice and Simmons (1991) stated that the whole language approach finds writing a complement to reading and that these activities are mutually reinforcing when guided by the teacher in a child's

meaningful content. Goodman, Goodman and Hood (1989) believed that whole language learning was child centered, individual and integrated learning. It is familiar work to the child because it is his/her own story. The teacher's role is to facilitate the writing through observation and assessment with the child and to provide a plan for the child's instruction. Dixon (1987) agreed that students' growth was best shown by their written, spoken and otherwise demonstrated responses, that the student's sense of independence and responsibility was enhanced through his/her continuous self-evaluation.

Boyle and Radocy (1993) suggested that teachers develop a forum to evaluate the writing functions of students and devise ways to alleviate their learning problems with immediate feedback on their strategies. Teachers have the responsibility of ensuring that each child has opportunities to develop skills and knowledge necessary to make choices in writing to meet their own purposes.

Valencia and Pearson (1987) believed that the interaction of teachers and students during the writing process provided the best opportunity to assess students' skills and aptitudes, and plan for instruction. Langer and Applebee (1987) stressed that the teacher's task is to help each child to develop his own strategies as a writer and to continually improve them according to new experiences. Children can be exposed to real and vicarious experiences, and the act of transcribing their ideas about them is a highly personal process. The

process is a direct line from the internalized experience of the child to written expression.

Smith (1982), Tierney, Carter and Desai (1990) and Valencia (1990) suggested that teachers develop the situations daily where students feel at ease to write for their own purposes and that improved ways of daily assessment would improve instruction. Improved writing also furthers the child's attitude as a writer; he/she becomes aware of the conventions of written language through writing and editing his/her own writing and collaborating with classmates to write and edit writing.

Graves (1987) observed that the teacher's concern for writing must be in the process through which growth takes place rather than in the finished product. Newman (1985) suggested that students take an active part in their own learning, integrating reading, writing and speaking with an emphasis on deriving meaning that is relevant to themselves.

Calkins (1986) felt that written expression offered unlimited possibilities in meeting an individual's social needs. The expression of inner thoughts and emotions lets the child become aware of his purposes for writing which provides a measure of self-assessment. In expressing ambitions, fears and hopes, the child gives the trained teacher much material which gives insight into the instructional needs of individual children.

Brophy (1979) and Johns (1991) agreed that the responsibility for implementing an environment for writing lies with the teacher. Carbo and

Dunn et al. (1986) stressed that teachers need to be more concerned with the identification of learning strengths and learning styles. These important, positive self feelings translate into increased academic and cognitive performance.

Elrod (1979) and Perera (1990) recommended that the teachers observe the learning strategies used by children, and use those strategies as the basis for the lesson design. Duplication of the natural learning strategy allowed for absorption and application of new concepts through familiar channels.

Peer interactive learning was the recommended approach of Slavin (1985), Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1986) advocating a style of instruction known as "cooperative learning," which put students together in interdependent working groups, providing positive interaction and positive peer collaboration, along with subject matter instruction.

Resinbrink (1987) and Janda (1990) observed the benefits of peer interaction among students with varied language abilities. When encouraged, peers taught one another, utilizing collaborative strategies to allow each student to contribute according to his/her abilities. As a result, students with lesser language abilities attained higher achievement, while students with greater language abilities attained positive reinforcement through instruction of others.

Roettger and Szymczuki (1990) recommended that teachers include meaningful, purposeful open-ended questions during

conferencing to allow children to understand the strengths and strategies they used to complete a writing task as well as to solve personal problems.

The findings of Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) and Taylor (1988) supported the idea that when guided, children developed an awareness of the purposes and places to use varied forms of writing communication in their daily lives. Taylor stressed that guidance by teachers achieved results when teachers encouraged literacy behavior by connecting writing exercises to family experiences.

Beale (1985) and Winter (1985) suggested there was a need to conference with children and their parents, and to understand the child's family. The child was the link and messenger when the child understood what he/she was doing and what he/she hoped to gain from the job of writing. The child then transferred the message of such ideas to his/her parents.

Description of Selected Solutions

The prior survey of existing literature provided the writer with a variety of ideas from which to develop assessment techniques concurrent with instructional strategies for the teachers of third grade. The ongoing process enabled the children of the target population to effectively communicate their thoughts through the use of written communication.

The writer observed that the third grade population had limited understanding that written language could be used as a means to express their thoughts to compliment, complain or persuade family, friends, peers and officials when desired. The writer presented and facilitated eight workshops specifically designed to prepare the third grade teachers at the site to implement a portfolio approach to assessment. Each two hour workshop was held once a month, during school-wide teacher planning time.

The writer provided workshops to guide participants in understanding their role as advocates of a portfolio approach for assessment and evaluation of children's written language. The writer and workshop participants introduced assessment related to instruction plans to the PTA, community and administrators, utilizing flip charts to explain current circumstances and a slide presentation of children working alone and together with their respective portfolios at Writing to Learn Centers. Information was provided on how portfolio assessment avoided bias, cultural or otherwise, and how it provided measures of the effectiveness and accountability of the public education system. The workshop activities enabled the teachers to introduce alternative assessment methodologies throughout the district, to students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The writer utilized their prior classroom experience and their exposure to parents through parent/teacher conferences and organizations like the PTA.

The writer was responsible for the preparation and distribution of agendas and other materials. The agenda included the establishment of responsibilities and tasks for all involved; and the selection and participation of guest lecturers in workshops and other events.

Teachers discussed and reviewed examples of children's portfolios, portfolio contents, and constructed a portfolio at the collaborative Workshop Writing center, for their own collections of artifacts and writing activities.

Teachers collaboratively developed a three week lesson plan at each month's workshop through a review of assessment instruments and techniques related to instruction strategies. Examples of a three week plan for written communication lessons incorporating assessment ideas were used as the basis for each teacher's own three week plan.

The following steps were taken by the writer before and after each monthly workshop: (1) handouts and agendas for the scheduled workshop and workshop evaluation forms were prepared; (2) handouts, agendas and forms were distributed; (3) completed forms were collected; and (4) meetings were held with each participant to address any needs or problems where individual changes could prove helpful.

Following each teachers' workshop, the writer modeled the instruction and assessment lesson through demonstration with those teachers and their students in their classrooms. A guest lecturer spoke on a single component and its relationship to development of a portfolio

classroom setting. All of the following components of a classroom portfolio setting were demonstrated at each teacher workshop:

1. A classroom collaborative writing center was created to demonstrate how portfolios were to be used for self, peer and teacher assessment and evaluation.

2. Participants received assistance in how to manage the task of daily assessment of children's writing by the child, teacher and child, child to child as well as care and use of sets of children's portfolios.

3. Plans incorporating instructional techniques and assessment techniques for individual children were discussed and utilized.

4. Selection and adoption of qualitative and quantitative instruments and criteria to assess children's writing in a whole language, child-centered classroom setting were collaboratively developed.

5. Participants arranged classrooms so that each third grade writing center was provisioned with the children's own familiar materials used to develop projects that actively supported the need for purposeful writing.

6. Participants received instruction in how to develop writing prompts from children's narratives of familiar experiences with family and of community events.

Teachers were encouraged to use successful teaching methodologies applied with active participation by children in a collaborative/ cooperative setting, which fostered peer assessment. They applied and instructed written expression skills linked to

assessment within the context of print materials gathered from the children's community. Participants created and modeled a jumbo-size classroom dialogue journal to encourage all children to write responses to each other to develop peer assessment and self-reflection formats. The writer demonstrated alternative forms of assessment and evaluation with portfolios of projects including (1) surveys and lists, (2) dialogue journals, (3) samples of written work, (4) reports of project events, (5) tapes of interviews and conferences, (6) photographs of children working with portfolios, (7) Likert type scales that recorded children's qualities and traits and strengths, and (8) holistic and analytical scoring related to an individual child's written language expectations.

The writer and participants arranged a Writer's Fair to which the community was invited. Included were the mayor and other city dignitaries as well as the local newspaper staff to view the varied writing projects of the children. Exhibited were the many portfolios, collections of individual children's writing in many forms and for many purposes in all subjects serving as ongoing measures of progress. The writer and participants created a learning environment which encouraged children to talk to each other about varied writing activities. The writer established a classroom environment of social situations where the children would use written language for recording weekly homework assignments, classroom group assignments, mini-conferences, letters, requests, and creating books from logos for daycare and kindergarten children.

The writer provided familiar print materials from the environment such as fast food logos and cultural event posters to develop children's background of experiences, and trained teachers to use these experiences as prompts for written language exercises. The writer supplemented their classroom resource materials, and applied and instructed writing activities within the context of print materials from the children's communities, such as children's museums, posters or other expressive arts, concerts for family, university and community college programs, library, children's book reviews, park and recreation programs in print, hospital wellness programs in print, and neighborhood newspapers and local newspapers with special children's editions.

The participants monitored and adjusted writing behaviors in the classroom environment that encouraged children to take risks as a writer for many personal purposes as well as curricula purposes, and they showed children how written language looks in its varied forms such as poems, letters, novels, recipes, news and journals. Participants identified and observed children's learning styles and strategies in order to provide written language instruction that met their needs, including the promotion of writing activities built around the themes of literature across the curriculum and application of the themes to real-life situations.

Participants involved all third graders at the school site in creating a history of exhibits, a museum of the third grade children's artifacts. The community was invited to review the books created from the children's taped interviews. Children and their families developed historical

cultural exhibits from family and/or children's toys, baby shoes, and other objects (older than two years).

The writer presented and facilitated a parent and child homework workshop which centered on the concerns of the parents about the meaning of assessment and evaluation of their child's abilities as a writer. The date and time for this workshop was discussed and finalized at the first teacher workshop. The writer was responsible for sending an invitation to all parents in the target group and follow-up telephone calls were made by the participating third grade teachers. The writer provided a booklet of writing activities related to television programming and viewing at home with family. Open ended assignments were the focus of writing while watching TV. The assignments concerned familiar experiences at home by which parents could understand how their child's writing instruction was linked to assessment and evaluation.

An important factor leading to the success of the program was that consultants, the participants, the school principal and district representatives at the school site all supported this program which provided assessment and evaluation techniques that complemented and enhanced pre-existing, mandated evaluation procedures and encouraged school/family involvement.

The writer prepared an eight month outline utilizing alternative forms of assessment which included ongoing instruction plans and samples of children's collections of actual work as a writer. These models addressed the measurement of a child's progress in varied forms

of written communication. As part of the outline preparation, the writer developed a list of corporate and community sources of written forms of communication that recognized the diverse cultures of the involved classroom populations. The writer gathered, selected, and composed letters, evaluation forms, and checklists for parents, teachers, administrators, and interested members of the community. Working with the site principal, site facilitator, and school district officials, the writer arranged publicity and obtained community sites for a writer's fair. The writer met with the site principal, school facilitator and language arts advisor to present an outline of the proposed activities prior to school site use.

The writer gathered materials to include in each third grade classroom Writing to Learn Center for the third grade teacher classroom and parent/child homework workshops. Immediately prior to implementation, the writer administered a district-approved Writing Interest Survey (Quinn, 1989) to all target third grade children for the purpose of documenting the child's capabilities and attitudes toward writing.

Report of Action Taken

The writer integrated into the portfolio assessment approach workshop plan for training teachers as much of the existing research and programs as feasible. The workshop provided thorough information and active participation related to the purposeful collection of a child's work in a portfolio and also provided methods to measure effectiveness and accountability of the public education system. Workshop methods and strategies for teachers involved the use of modeling and role-playing. Commercially produced materials included newspapers, posters, and videotapes. Writer-made materials consisted of writing samples, information charts, graph forms to record required information and evaluation forms to provide feedback about workshop activities.

To provide a more effective program, the writer brought in trained workshop leaders who modeled the desired behaviors and initiated small and large group discussions. Guest lecturers spoke about one of six selected components used in the development of a classroom portfolio setting as an alternative/supplemental form of assessment and evaluation of a third grade student writer.

Teachers collaboratively developed a three week lesson plan at each month's workshop through a review of assessment instruments and techniques related to instruction strategies. Examples of a three week plan for written communication lessons incorporating assessment ideas were used as the basis for each teacher's own three week plan.

The following steps were taken before and after each monthly workshop: (1) Handouts and agendas for the scheduled workshop and workshop evaluation forms were prepared; (2) handouts, agendas and forms were distributed; (3) completed forms were collected; and (4) meetings were held with each participant to address any needs or problems where individual changes could prove helpful. The writer was responsible for the distribution of agendas and other materials. The agendas included the establishment of responsibilities and tasks for all involved and the selection and arrangements with guest lecturers for workshops and events. All workshop activities utilized the combined components introduced in the initial workshop; a review and evaluation of each concluded each workshop.

The writer provided demonstrations in each classroom utilizing writing lesson assessment techniques such as (1) observing and recording children at work, (2) emphasizing collaborative learning strategies within writing activity centers and (3) using examples from children's writing portfolios to create and share peer assessment through utilization of a group response journal. The writer and teachers created a learning-to-write environment that provided access to the lessons of the writing process through a portfolio assessment approach using writing for a purpose, experiencing meaningful content and acquiring academic skills as discussed in the state writing-reading curricula. The selected strategies and activities were chosen because they fostered enthusiasm and encouraged interactive learning opportunities. The

program goal of developing children's written language abilities by using developmental writing instruction keyed to ongoing assessment was consistent with the state and district curricula. The writer used existing, successful teaching methodologies by supplementing the classroom writing lessons with writing activities related to purposeful writing in the children's communities such as recreation programs, church bulletins, safety slogans and neighborhood newspapers. The goal was to relate the writing-reading curricula to the students' real world.

The state reading and writing curricula was studied for content by the writer who then attempted to match the content of the curriculum to the content of varied written forms of communication available in the children's communities.

Parental Involvement

The parents/family of the target population were given a schedule of the eight month program at the first parent/child/teacher homework workshop conference and reviewed the program with the writer. The intent of the program was explained to the parents and their role as participants at home was emphasized and illustrated by the writer through examples. The degree of parent/family commitment to active participation in weekly homework assignments was modeled to the parents through the use of homework workshops, checklists and examples of a portfolio of varied functional and expressive writing activities.

Written forms of communication and their importance to reading and writing skills, child/teacher expectations, structured lessons and activities, progress logs, charts and schedules kept by the writer, sign-in work sheets, children's portfolios, group dialogue journals and the classroom dialogue journal were demonstrated for the parents and the child's benefit. In addition, the parents/family were invited to a scheduled homework workshop, child/family/teacher conferences, field trips and Writer's Fair. The parent workshop was designed to demonstrate to the participants what their individual responsibilities were for accomplishing a homework assignment. The desired outcome was that the child would accept and enjoy the primary responsibility of completion of home writing activities, while the parent/family would encourage and assist when necessary.

The workshop was also designed to facilitate homework efforts in which parents and their children were exposed to television as a positive tool for homework, rather than an excuse for not completing it. Writing activities were designed so the child could work alone, or with parental involvement. Television activities were used to demonstrate how the learning skills taught in the classroom could be reinforced by homework assignments. The writer attempted to create a climate in which parents could relate in a positive manner to their child and the child's homework assignment. The workshop writing skill building lessons developed by the writer and teachers were related to the basic

skill areas of the California Standards of Achievement, required of all elementary school children.

Implementing the Workshops

Certain aspects of the implementation plan require a more detailed description to fully understand the writer's methodology. Activities were specifically designed to increase a child's writing experiences and to improve a child's ability to understand the function of the different writing forms of communication found in a literate society. Such activities were varied and adjusted to address the level of interest or enthusiasm exhibited by each child in the target population. The classroom setting was modified to accommodate the implementation plan in the following ways. The writer arranged a "language-rich" classroom with many forms of writing gathered from the children's communities. The writer then met with the practicum observer to discuss the organization, management, evaluation tools and the time estimated for each workshop session and classroom support. Implementation dates were cleared with the observer and times were set for practicum updates, beginning with implementation and continuing to the conclusion and dissemination of the report and its findings. The target population was given a district-approved Writing Interest Survey (Quinn 1989) one week prior to the first week of implementation.

Month One — Components of a Portfolio Assessment Approach Keyed to Instructional Planning.

Week One

The purpose of the first workshop was to help teachers identify the six classroom components used to establish a writing portfolio as a means of assessment and instructional writing experiences for each child.

At the first workshop, the writer introduced to the participants significant compilations of material produced by children during the month prior to the workshop. Participants analyzed these portfolios of children's writings. The participants and the writer charted several purpose statements for the use of a portfolio. The focus of the workshop was on a definition of a portfolio as a purposeful collection of child work that exhibits to the child, teacher, family and community the child's efforts, progress, achievements, and instructional plans, including criteria that is taught, explained and understood by the child as a writer. The objective for this workshop was to formulate one's own purposes for portfolio use. The guest speakers shared the purpose of their portfolios. Their discussions with each other and the participants was on the likeness and difference in purpose of the portfolio, decisions for the items they included and qualitative and quantitative criteria. The writer had prepared a slide presentation which identified components of a successful portfolio approach to assessment of children's writing related to instructional planning. The writer presented an analysis of her study

of current literature on the subject of instructional planning as the focus of a portfolio approach. A handout of a thematic writing unit provided the prompt for the design of a three week lesson plan. The "praise and planning" conference portion of the plan was modeled and practiced to provide assessment linked to instruction experience and to model effective strategies for formulating assessment instruction as well as to include specific instruction for teaching encouragement and cooperation during group writing activities. The ten children who appeared in the writer's slide presentation demonstrated elements of written communication lessons and peer assessment. The writer modeled the lessons and adjusted the content of the lessons as she monitored the children's forms of active participation.

The participants constructed a personal portfolio and collaborated in the development of a three week lesson plan. Parents were informed of the assessment and instruction approach called "praise and plan." They were also informed of the parent/child homework activities and workshop that would help their child increase his/her understanding and enjoyment of writing for many purposes at school and at home.

Weeks Two through Four:

The writer and classroom teachers gathered familiar print materials from the children's communities. The children were introduced to the Writing to Learn classroom centers. They helped each other construct personal portfolios from the gathered materials. Then the writer

modeled ways for the children to exhibit elements of writing a story by active participation. Through the children's active participation, the teachers discovered the interrelationship of "praising and planning," the bridge of assessment and instruction. The children practiced writing specific statements of praise to each other about their portfolio in a large, group-response journal.

The writer reviewed the teachers' three-week lesson plan and modeled the elements of guided practice, encouraging the children to communicate in written form their oral responses to each other. The writer and teachers interviewed individual children about the lesson and recorded their responses. The writer met with each teacher individually to address needs or problems and provided assistance. The decision to use familiar games incorporating prose, poems, and songs was based on teacher observation of children at play. The reason for choosing this method became clear during the writing process. All children were involved in concrete experiences and knew what information was needed. All senses were used and displayed on a graphic organizer. The intent of weeks two through four was to guide the children and teachers through writing lessons structured to use "praising and planning."

Closure activity involved all children responding to each other by writing specific positive comments in the large classroom response journal. Parents and students were provided with homework assignments designed for writing while watching television with family

members. These assignments introduced a homework checklist and a list of positive responses to be part of the child's portfolio. The children expressed their eagerness to share the portfolio and writing activities with their family.

Month Two — Guest Lecturer Speaking on Cooperative Collaborative Learning: A Way to Structure Writing Lessons and Assessment.

Week One

During the second workshop, the participants shared their children's reactions and understanding of portfolios and group response journals. They also shared the parents' reaction to the homework program, "Writing While Watching TV." The children had created a personal portfolio of familiar logos, park information, and community events. The portfolios were also used to hold the classroom and home activity assignments, assessments and instructional records. The participants reported on their three-week lesson plan. The teachers felt that reading familiar poetry, prose and songs in groups was a valuable teaching strategy and, as a result, many children improved their oral communication skills and transferred this to group writing. This review concluded with discussion of the question, "How many assessments linked to instruction techniques have you acquired that you can use to help your children improve their writing?"

The objective for this workshop was to develop knowledge and assessment strategies linked to children working collaboratively and cooperatively. The guest speaker outlined the activities for the workshop and ways to implement cooperative lessons in the classroom of thirty children. Two small groups were formed. Each group was responsible for presenting one of the formats for cooperative learning in a lesson. The groups were given 20 minutes to instruct the other participants about the basic plan of the lesson and the practical aspects of materials, time allotment, classroom setting, etc. This intensive lesson prepared the teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to work in this form with their children.

The workshop evaluation consisted of practice with the tools of assessment, such as techniques of observation, conferences, and writing specific compliments to each other in a group response journal.

Weeks Two Through Four

Demonstration of modeling, practice and assessment were given by this writer. The writer and teacher divided the class into three cooperative groups. Each group of ten children was assigned to one of three Writing to Learn Centers, utilizing the classroom teacher planned lessons. Demonstration lessons were given by this writer on the skills of working in cooperative groups. These skills were charted and studied. Emphasis was on learning how to work and study together in specific ways, such as discussion, observation, and general group interaction.

Helping each other solve negative behavior and learning to accept another's contrasting point of view were among the positive social skills emphasized. The children wrote in a cooperative format.

Closure activity involved two members of each group recording in a large group journal the responses of their group to the content of the lesson. The writer and classroom teacher interviewed individual children and recorded their responses.

Month Three — Conventions of Writing in Context of Literature and Meaningful, Familiar Content

Week One

The third workshop began with time for the teachers to share their students' portfolios. Teacher discussion included an analysis of the changes and improvements in the children's writing. They also discussed the changes in their own strategies and techniques of instruction linked to assessment through daily conferences with small groups and individual children. The participants reviewed the objectives for the program and the specific objective for that month. The objective of this workshop was to develop knowledge of new approaches and pedagogy assessing needs and shaping the writing curriculum on conventions of writing in context of literature and meaningful, familiar content.

The development of the three-week lesson plan included activities from this workshop that began with familiar literature and songs

which share the common theme of friendship. Children sharing familiar community and family events and children's prior experiences related to the theme were part of the plan. The guest speakers helped to develop this plan. The assessment techniques of observation and writing collaboratively in the group response journal, as well as self-assessment were used as evaluation tools for this workshop.

Weeks Two through Four

Children listened to and read stories about friendship many times and in many ways. The theme and characters employed familiar events and provided opportunities for varied forms and purposes of writing. Children learned to define and express their thoughts by locating phrases, names and verbs. They rephrased to clarify a point. Role play and dramatic presentation helped the children expand sentences by adding details. The aforementioned activities were modeled by the writer and followed with guided practice by the children. The writer and teachers conferenced with the children first in a group setting and then individually. Peer responses of encouragement were recorded in their group journals. The teachers' observation notes revealed a high degree of participation by all children as well as high levels of energetic interaction.

Month Four — Writing Portfolios as a Means of Assessment and Instructional Planning

Week One

The speaker's first step was to ask the participants to review portfolios of children's writing activities collected during the practicum project to identify, describe, define and display, in chart form, children's learning behaviors. Participants were asked to identify a child's learning strengths, learning styles and positive learning qualities exhibited as the child attended to various writing activities. The speaker then directed the workshop participants in a simulation of a classroom setting with role play as the method for explaining and demonstrating the following:

1) how to instruct children to identify and apply their personal learning strengths and positive learning qualities in different forms of written communication throughout the various subjects included in the curriculum,
2) how to provide varied contextual and different experiences in the community whereby children see meaningful purpose in the use of different types of writing, such as newspaper reports, advertisements, posters, bulletins, notices, and letters, and insure that children understand literature as valued forms of written communication,
3) how to review and assess the children's portfolios as a whole, i.e. as a collection of many types of writing that show a child's

effort, progress and achievement over time which serve to reinforce his/her personal learning strengths.

The participants then began collaborative activity planning for instruction based on the writer's handout which reviewed literature about learning behavior (Rich, 1988), instruction of character traits (Brooks, 1990), multiple intelligence theory (Gardner & Hatch,1989) and learning styles (Carbo, Dunn & Dunn, 1986). The workshop continued with a demonstration by twelve children from five third grade classrooms who shared their portfolios with each other. They selected pieces from their individual collections of writing, choosing from several subjects, including homework assignments. As a group, they discussed and shared selected pieces that fit categories of writing, as well as for form, purpose and audience. This activity culminated with each child's contribution of new writing to their group journal. The children worked together to categorize the selected pieces by content and form to determine their purpose and the reader for whom the piece was written. The children read from each other's portfolios and commented and complimented their classmates on what they saw.

The workshop evaluation form was used for closure. The participants stated how the strategy of role play helped them understand ways to assess and revise instruction as required. The speaker instructed the participants to record observations of the group interacting as well as to record observations of children's strengths, positive qualities, actions and comments. In individual conferences, the

participants asked the children which parts of the writing portfolio were the most fun, what they had learned about themselves and a selection they would like to share with people outside the classroom. They analyzed the portfolio with the child and determined together which future writing projects would best utilize the child's identified strengths. Closure of this portion of the workshop provided opportunities for teachers to identify and further describe ways to use children's personal strengths, such as interest, energy, endurance, and inventiveness for ongoing assessment linked to ongoing instruction (Rich, 1988).

In the lesson plan portion of the workshop, teachers planned several community visits to provide context for use of varied written forms of communication. Literature, which was one kind of form of written language, was selected which reflected community events and the children's shared experiences of such events.

Weeks Two through Four

The neighborhood newspaper office, a large grocery store, post office, two parks, the city hall and the library were sites for community visits attended by parents, children, and teachers. All participants were engaged in recording observations during these pre-writing experiences. The children were provided with notebooks and disposable cameras. The visits and resultant notes and photographs provided common experiences for several writing activities. Through graphic organization of the information gained from these varied

contextual experiences, the writing activities were developed from children-selected topics of personal interest. Their evaluation of the community visits and verbal discussion during prewriting activities demonstrated their eagerness to add to their portfolio the different kinds of writing used in the community.

Month Five Whole Language Child Centered Literacy Development

Week One

The fifth workshop began in a library setting. Children from the practicum site had been invited to meet a former teacher who was now an author and illustrator. Her slide presentation exemplified one way to define whole language philosophy. Children were engaged in writing activities that built around promotion of the themes that children can apply to real life experiences. The presentation was on how to persuade children to communicate what they know through content that is meaningful and purposeful. The author writes children's books in an autobiographical form, with themes about family, lasting friendships, growing up and growing old. She shared her portfolio of notes, journals and childhood photographs that were the source of information for her books. She spoke of the many childhood experiences that motivated her to write; experiences about her favorite toys, a sleep-over she planned, the puppet plays she created, the card games played with her grandmother, and the fights she had with her cousins.

The author questioned the children about their similar experiences while she shared actual toys, objects, postcards, letters and her grandmother's very old checkerboard. She told the children how these objects "sparked" her childhood memory. It was these memories that initiated her writing; she began writing these memories in her journal and, eventually, into books. The children were led in a discussion that involved remembrance of special toys, objects and family events. Then the children engaged in the pre-writing portion of the writing process with familiar, meaningful content in a non-judgmental setting. This context allowed the children to verbalize their experiences in a natural way. The author read two of her stories, after which she invited the children to write about their own experiences. They were helped to write in a note-taking mode, assisted by adults and peers.

The children were invited to write a first draft of their autobiography. Their writing exhibited developmental stages and learning strategies of each child. Workshop participants became aware of the multiple teaching strategies needed to guide the children into and through a writing activity. They observed and recorded the interaction between the author and children, the interaction between the children themselves, and also their own reactions. Participants agreed that the pre-writing experiences initiated by the author clearly provided the interest and motivation for the writing activities that followed. Plans were developed with parents, teachers and children based on the process of interviewing, researching, and writing letters and personal narratives.

The writer modeled/demonstrated a child and family activity called Personal Narratives (Fordham, 1989) to parents and teachers. A handout of five examples of personal narratives was depicted in an illustrated form of role play exercises. The ease of the narrative was seen in the telling and writing exercises presented by the children. The exercises were included in parent/teacher and teacher/child conferences. The writer introduced models of another child and family activity called "May I Share" (Yamaguchi,1992). The child's written assignment was to tell the family about something new that he/she had learned in school. The family responded by writing a thank you letter for the information, adding praise and comments.

Time was arranged for conferences with parents who were invited to the library, the site of this workshop. Comments from parents centered about their interest, enjoyment and understanding in their child's writing responses to the author's prompt. Parents showed an eagerness to (1) add information to their child's remembrances; (2) begin personal narratives; (3) respond to the "May I Share" activity and (4) help their child add to his/her portfolio. Parents stated that they could see how a teacher could plan instruction by reviewing an actual piece of a child's writing and that this in fact was the basis by which the teacher could judge the child's abilities without a planned "test."

Weeks Two through Four

The children followed the author's suggestions to talk with their family and find out what childhood events and experiences they were able to recall. The children were asked to locate objects such as postcards, letters, toys, baby clothing, photographs or any other memory-invoking items to compile their writings. These were shared at two more visits to the library. During this time, the participants and children were introduced to authors of works displayed in the library. The children brought artifacts and taped interviews as well as "published" interviews taken from family members and family friends. Teachers and parents had typed the interviews. This collection initiated a cultural history/geography exhibit at the library site.

Closure

Parents, teachers, and observers stated that the children were visibly eager to share the enjoyment they felt at producing their own writing. They appeared to be developing a sense of the importance of the self as an audience of their own writing and exhibited a sense of real purpose. Further, they wrote group and individual letters to persuade the librarian to buy their writings as history "stuff" for the library shelves, for others to read.

Month Six — Management of Classroom Time to Allow for Portfolio Assessment with Individual Students

Week One

The focus of the sixth workshop was to discuss how to manage classroom time for daily conferences with individual children to review their respective portfolios. The intent of the workshop was to determine the time required and decide how that time would be best utilized to advance the portfolio assessment approach to writing. The speaker's overhead presentation directed the participants towards effective time management in the classroom setting, providing specific half hours to conference with a minimum of five children daily. The classroom setting that provides the opportunity to meet individually with students began with the "Writing to Learn Centers" where children were involved in self directed writing and discussion activities. The writing activities were selected from those previously used with the children. The activities were self-managed or managed with peer support which encouraged the children to produce many forms of writing to add to their portfolios. As a result of such activities, teacher/child conference time became both possible and practical.

During the workshop, the presenter constructed and modeled a small, individual conference carrel (three sided cardboard divider). The purpose of the carrel, according to the speaker, was to create in the child a sense of value for his/her work as an individual by highlighting the individual child's work and focusing the attention of the child and

observer on that child's work. Materials were provided to each participant to construct ten carrels. Samples of the child's self-selected pieces were attached to the carrel and pockets were provided for observation and conference notes. Writing assessments, instruction checklists, and "praise and plan" notes from the teacher and parents were placed in the pockets of the carrel.

Participants in this workshop were directed through group exercises that used examples of children's writing activities. The writer and guest speaker had compiled handouts of specific writing activities used by the third grade children at the school site. The children had given their permission to use this work. The writing activities had been developed during the practicum with the children selecting examples to share. The subjects of this work included planning a game, summarizing the week's "read aloud" stories, explaining a new learning to family or friends, explaining group or partner projects, writing about one's self or family, creating books for kindergarten, reporting daily class or school news, creating posters and poems telling about feelings, record keeping for equipment in use, and other real life processes such as interviewing or writing a letter to request information or to persuade.

Closure

Participants stated how familiar, successful activities and criteria activity, such as checklists, the idea of self-direction and the carrel would facilitate the management of individual conferences. The

participants in the workshop suggested that the portfolio storage and carrel could be 1) kept in each child's desk, 2) kept in group sets at "Writing to Learn Centers" or 3) kept in moveable storage bins/files/ boxes. All ideas were dependent upon the purposes of the individual teacher.

Weeks Two through Four

At the conclusion of the sixth workshop, as in every other workshop led by the speaker, the participants collaborated to develop a three week lesson plan to be implemented in their respective classrooms. The classroom sessions were designed so that maximum utilization was made of individual and group student writing activities and teacher/student assessment discussions. This was done by rotating the activities of the groups within the classroom. One of the procedures was to assess a portion of a group of children during a class session on an ongoing basis. This involved the group and teacher in a discussion mode regarding their choices of subject material, writing activities and their feelings about how well they were doing. Every child understood, through practice, their role as a group member and the importance of taking responsibility for their work when the teacher conferenced with individual students.

Further individual assessment sessions were conducted. The time ranged from two to five minutes. This was considered adequate to address the continuing instructional needs of the students, some of

whom were highly motivated and required little guidance. For those students with advanced abilities, materials and assignments steered them in the direction of higher level independent activities so that their interest and motivation were not dampened.

Month Seven — Developing Writing Rubrics Based on Qualitative and Quantitative Criteria

Week One

The focus of the seventh workshop was to address the place of an evaluation scoring guide when using a portfolio approach for ongoing assessment and ongoing instructional planning. The guest speaker introduced the workshop subject by engaging the participants in a problem solving activity. The directions for the activity contained a rating scale based upon the attainment of specific criteria developed for a specific activity. The criteria and expectations for the activity were discussed, questioned and clarified for all. The participants were divided into two groups of six each and were given identical items, contained in a box, which they were to use in the activity. The activity was to construct a table, gather all group members around it and record the names of the people in the group, their assigned jobs as a group member and the sequence of the activity. The actual recorded events that took place depicted the qualities exhibited by the participants when constructing a table with four different length legs, masking tape and paper supplies. Qualities such as persistence,dedication, enthusiasm,

inventiveness, responsibility and accuracy were the behaviors observed and recorded. One group placed the box on the floor and placed the table on top of it after unsuccessfully attempting to match both sets of table legs with another group. The participants checked the writing directions in the criteria for their individual report. The report reflected their part in the group activity and their feelings about being a member of the group, their assigned job(s) and the activity itself. The participants stated that their prior experience helped them solve this problem. They recorded that they knew (1) what a table looked like, (2) the process of assembling it, and (3) had knowledge that at times some parts won't fit.

The table activity led to designing rubrics that were used by the presenter and writer as an assessment to indicate the expertise of the workshop participants. The brief discussion that followed was on planning and designing for specific instruction and assessment processes related to authentic content across the curriculum (Valencia, 1991). The participants, in cooperative groups, created a graphic organizer about their knowledge of evaluation scoring guides, quantitative symbols, scales, content, and progressive levels of criteria. The presenter led the participants into a discussion based upon purposes for a rubric as an instruction tool and a way to define a child's progress or areas to reteach. They observed several rubrics based upon progressive levels of criteria, such as simple Likert and picture scales, holistic, primary trait and analytic formulas.

Month Eight Review and Evaluation of the Workshops

Week One

The eighth workshop was used for verbal and written evaluation of the preceding workshops. The writer presented a review of the workshops on the components of a portfolio assessment approach. The workshop evaluation form that was used for closure for the prior workshops was used to begin workshop eight. This workshop was used for verbal and written evaluation of the teacher workshops and the parent workshop, work at home including the teacher/parent workshop content, materials, components, format, presenters and guest lecturers. The writer and teachers presented a summary of their respective classroom experiences, utilizing a portfolio approach to assessment, instruction and evaluation.

Comments written by teachers, parents and administrators on the Workshop Evaluation Form were displayed on an overhead and used as the basis for discussion. The discussion was guided by the question: How did a portfolio assessment approach communicate the progress, talents, learning strengths and instructional needs of the child to a child, parent, teacher, administrator and the community? All who attended indicated on their evaluation forms that the workshops made significant changes in the writing portion of the curriculum for themselves and their children. Additionally, the teachers reported that the workshop format allowed them valuable time to exchange ideas with other teachers. They

reported that the monthly exchange of portfolio examples of children's work that they were eager to share with someone else was understood as an automatic, accountable, assessment tool. The teachers requested that the training for the use of the portfolio of a child's actual activities, projects and performance continue in the same workshop to classroom support format.

Enthusiasm for this portfolio assessment approach as a way of documenting a child's achievement of written forms of communications encouraged the writer, parents, and teachers to cooperatively plan a presentation, as advocates, for this form of assessment for the parent/teacher groups in the community. Parents and teachers as advocates for assessment beyond standardized tests was an important focus of this workshop. The writer, teachers of the target population, parents who aided in the classroom, and school site specialists collaborated in the design of a presentation of portfolio assessment approach to the PTA and the community. The target population had been introduced to a well known literature story. Each participant presented a story version and the portfolio writing activities that the children wrote in response to that story. The story, "The Tortoise and the Hare," was chosen as the presentation model. Participants read aloud a version of the well-known literature story. They also reviewed a portfolio of writing by the third graders in response to the stories. These writing activities had been developed by the target population based on their interests and motivation. The participants recognized that the characters

in the story enumerated the learning strengths and traits such as perseverance and a sense of humor that were seen as children responded in written forms to the story. The writer led the participants in a brief discussion of the learning strengths, unique qualities, talents, and prior knowledge exhibited by the characters in the story. The participants related their discussion to the display of graphic organizers of children's topics generated at their classroom "Writing to Learn Centers" in response to the story.

Also displayed was the portfolio work that children had selected with their teacher, and the topic and writing activities they developed in response to the stories. Positive comments and suggestions given by readers were attached to each response activity. The writing activities for this story included posters to announce the running event, ongoing news reports of the results, park employee direction and warning signs for park use, invitations to picnics and pre and post event parties, a photographer's story, interviews with the families Hare and Tortoise, letters of complaint by the Hare Family about the track, advertisements for popcorn, lemonade, balloons, and a billboard from the Tortoise T Shirt Company.

Weeks Two through Four

Demonstration by children of increased interest, attitude, and understanding of the purposes of writing as well as familiarity with the use of self, peer, and teacher assessment in developing a portfolio for

their work continued to be seen in their eagerness to seek audiences to share their writing. Children's self-selected works of written communication pieces were exhibited at a writer's fair at the school site and at community sites, both in the portfolios of individual and group writing.

The writer arranged for the children's portfolios of writing activities and materials for reader's comments to be available for the following five weeks. The community site was the main city library and cultural center. One teacher, one class and their parents were available each week to discuss the portfolios, the writing activities and the attached criteria. Members of the Friends of the Library Association, the mayor, and other city officials, members of the State PTA, district education directors and advisors attended this event.

During the month following the culmination of the practicum, the children of the target population were given the Writer's Interest Survey (Quinn, 1989). The writer, school site facilitator and language arts advisor evaluated the data. The writer prepared the results for informational meetings with the full school site staff and parents who were part of the advocacy team to document a portfolio assessment approach as an accountable measurement of progress for public education of elementary school children.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

The problem that existed at the school site and became the focus for this practicum was that teachers lacked a continuous assessment process by which the achievements and instructional needs were observed and communicated on an ongoing basis to the child and parent. Information and strategies were provided regarding assessment and evaluation of each child's work in order to measure progress. The results were a way to document and effectively communicate such progress.

The primary method selected to bring this about was the development and presentation of eight monthly workshops and classroom support by the writer. Each child's strengths, weaknesses and optimal learning methodologies provided a basis for ongoing parent/teacher input and instruction. Additionally, new strategies for development of learning skills addressed the individual child's needs in a personal, integrated manner, needs which stemmed from cultural differences and linguistic orientation.

Evidence was presented by the teachers to confirm that all the objectives were met. The Workshop Evaluation Form was used to document in a formal way the degree of effectiveness of the workshop

training. The results of the implementation of the practicum indicated that the portfolio assessment approach was a clear and positive way of reporting the child's progress in the writing process and demonstrating written language competence rather than report cards of discrete skills (Cambourne & Turbill, 1990).

Objective 1

The first objective called for all third grade teachers at the practicum site to attend seven out of eight workshops and report a gain of a minimum of three or more ways to use a collection of a child's actual work as a means of assessment and instructional planning. The intent was to give teachers a way to gain knowledge and understanding of the connection between continuous assessment and continuous instructional plans related to evaluation of a child's written communication.

All third grade teachers at the practicum site participated in each of the eight workshops, as documented on the Workshop Evaluation Form. Teachers' comments in the workshop group journal and on the Workshop Evaluation Form confirmed that the workshops had provided them with at least three positive ways to assess a child's ongoing progress. The teachers indicated that they were not asked to take on a new task; rather they began to use familiar regular classroom practices, i.e. writing activities, in a more structured way. The writing activities were related to processes of the subjects across the curriculum. Charts

and journal entries defined the writing activities and the many topics and forms of writing .

All teachers recorded that they had changed or extended their instruction methods to match the assessment needs of each child. The teachers' comments in their group journal indicated that they were in a better position to document children's progress on a continuous basis for parents, district and community.

By the end of the second workshop, each teacher recorded that they had adopted the "praise and plan" format to guide a child in the selection of topics for daily writing activity. They verified that they used the child's collected work as a diagnostic tool to assess developmental writing levels.

By the end of the fourth workshop, teachers acknowledged that changing context for the same content changed and extended the levels of expectations of a child's product. The teachers recorded that ongoing assessment of different forms and purposes and stages of writing were seen in the child's collection. They explained how ongoing instruction was documented through opportunities for experiences in different contexts through role play.

By the end of the sixth workshop, teachers had recorded in their group journals ongoing assessment techniques such as the use of graphic organizers of information to display children's names with topics they presented and topics they selected for present and future individual or group writing.

Teachers also reported that children were eager to tell how their families helped with a home writing activity and exchange the written family comments. The excitement of homework as meaningful and exciting, was seen by their eagerness to show the work many times.

All teachers exceeded the intent of the first objective. They communicated to each other in the group journal, documenting how each of them had added at least one idea each month for assessment, and elaborated upon the ideas presented at the workshops.

By the end of the eighth workshop, a collection of a child's written work was recognized by the teacher as a valuable and accountable assessment and planning measurement. From the perspective of the participants, the workshop format was a great success. The teachers' comments indicated that the training had enabled them to use a child's actual work of writing activities for ongoing assessment and instruction to better show, communicate and emphasize what a child can do, understand, and also indicate potential for writing in many forms and for many purposes. The number of ways the teachers used writing activities to document the child's learning, talents, style, and creative abilities exceeded the writer's expectations as shown by a summary in Table 1.

Table 1

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES

1. Workshops provided the teachers with several ways of assessing children's writings.

2. Assessing a wide variety of writing activities provided the means of understanding children's writing progress and instructional needs, on an ongoing basis.

3. The children's work competence and potential was communicated to both children and parents.

Objective 2

The second objective called for at least four out of five third grade teachers at the practicum site to adopt and utilize a portfolio assessment approach to communicate writing progress and writing instructional needs to five or more children each day. The intent was to adopt the portfolio assessment approach to monitor and adjust instruction to actively promote a child's strengths as a writer and to address perceived areas requiring attention, as such areas arise in the course of instruction.

At the end of the first month of implementation, the third grade teachers reported that they were conferencing with at least one student a day. By the third month, they reported at least two student conferences each day. At the end of the fifth month, all of the teachers were conferencing with at least three students per day. After seven

months, all teachers were meeting the objective of conferencing with at least five students daily.

The above progress was achieved through a combination of time management in the classroom, groups of children selecting writing activities with which they were familiar and interested, and a sense of responsibility for themselves and as a group member. During the scheduled conference time, a posted sign on the classroom door imparted the serious nature of conference time. This attitude was extended to all of the school site as well as the target population students.

By the end of the sixth workshop, teachers recorded in group journals that they had moved from assessment of individual pieces in the portfolio to a way of assessing the portfolio as a whole collection. Teachers used a scale of writing versatility of form and purpose, child's self reflection of the home and school writing activities and the child's eagerness to share the collection.

The conferencing carrel facilitated the conference by providing an easily accessible tool for anecdotal reports and observation check lists. By the seventh month, teachers reported that they transferred their observation notes and posted five or six names of children scheduled for that day's conference. The teacher and child recorded the date and their feelings about the conference on a word and picture form. By the seventh month, the conferencing routine had become established as

documented on the district-approved writing check list and teacher-child conferencing form filed in each child's portfolio.

The teachers at the practicum site increased the number of child/teacher conferences with the target population until five or more children were scheduled daily by the end of the seventh month of the practicum, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Teacher	Daily Conferences Scheduled During Practicum Implementation			
Month	1	3	5	7
Teacher A	1	2	3	5
Teacher B	1	3	3	5
Teacher C	1	3	3	5
Teacher D	1	3	3	5
Teacher E	1	3	3	5

Objective Three

The third objective was that at least four out of five third grade teachers at the practicum site would, at least every two months, utilize the child's portfolio of writing projects as a means to communicate to the child's parents the progress of each child, and to convey to the parents ongoing instructional plans to address the child's needs for additional development of writing skills, including exercises for both the home and classroom environment. The intent was that teachers, the parents and

the child would become partners as they participated in the planning and implementation of exercises designed to develop the child's written communication ability.

Within a two month period during the practicum, teachers held parent-teacher conferences as verified by the conference forms. These conferences provided concrete information, exhibited in a portfolio, about their child's writing talents, learning strengths, developmental levels and special qualities. The parents stated that the conferences provided them with support in ways to help their child during writing activities at home.

By the second conference, parents reported on the homework check list an understanding of how to extend and reinforce writing that is introduced in the classroom. The "Writing While Watching TV" program was reported as mutually beneficial time for students and parents.

By the third conference, parents indicated that the home activities of an exchange of several parent-child letters called "May I Share?" 1) enabled their child to review their most recent learning accomplishments, both in content and context with the family, 2) enabled them to communicate about school and receive specific information on school subjects, and 3) gave them familiar background knowledge of the topics studied in their child's classroom which prepared them for their parent/teacher/student conference.

Teachers reported that children were eager to describe how their families helped with a home writing activity and exchange written family

comments. The excitement of homework was evidenced by the children's eagerness to show their portfolio of work many times, with different audiences.

All third grade teachers at the practicum site enthusiastically pursued parents as partners in planning goals for their child. They also reported on how informal conversations with parents about their work at home helped focus on the whole child rather than on a single child's projects. The focus was on the content of the whole portfolio, of what a child can do in writing rather than elements of conventions of writing.

Also, by the third conference, parents reported they were eager to help their child retell their factual happenings. They felt they could share stressful and difficult experiences through the activity called "Personal Narratives." Another result was that after conferencing, hesitant parents reported that they felt more knowledgeable about the program which helped them be less hesitant about seeking help from teachers.

To alleviate transportation and child care problems during this practicum, teachers made arrangements to meet parents of bussed children at home, schools and community centers. In a few cases, the classroom teacher sent copies of children's portfolios of work to the home to facilitate a telephone conference. Adult interpreters were sometimes used although oftentimes the child acted as interpreter. The objective was met by all teachers of the target population and exceeded by one teacher as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Parent-Teacher Conferences During Practicum

No. of Conferences Over 8 Month Period	1	2	3	4
Teacher A	X	X	X	
Teacher B	X	X	X	X
Teacher C	X	X	X	
Teacher D	X	X	X	
Teacher E	X	X	X	

Objective Four

Objective four required that all the target third grade children in attendance spend at least 40 minutes a day at the Writing to Learn Classroom Centers and that at least seven out of ten children would review their portfolios with at least one other person each day.

The activity specifically targeted the benefits of interactive learning, developing written communication and self assessment abilities through writing exercises and the sharing of information with others, thereby highlighting areas for further development. By the end of the first month, all children had signed in at the Writing to Learn Center. They placed their name beside the job selected for them each day. The teacher recorded the time, the activity, and the partner with whom they would review their portfolio.

By the end of the third month, the children agreed on activities and group jobs. In this, they demonstrated a sense of personal responsibility. Each child had recorded in their journal who their partner was, what they reviewed, and the activities selected. The influence that peers had on one another was documented when they recorded positive comments for each other in the choice of writing activities.

By the end of the fourth month, the workshops provided the teachers with ways to help children extend the activity of giving positive phrases to each other for self-assessment. This activity reflected one's attitudes toward learning, writing in particular.

By the end of the fifth month, the writer's reviewed written comments in the target population's journals. The comments reflected their ability to accept peer editing as a positive learning experience and enjoyable activity. By the end of the sixth month, most children had gained daily experience in assessing their work. The workshop had provided teachers with samples of self assessment and peer assessment techniques to match the developmental levels and learning styles of children and the Writing to Learn Centers provided the setting by which children responded to each other. The children's journals were used to record and reflect on each others responses in a positive manner.

By the eighth month of the practicum, the children became more involved with daily decision making. As reported, their discussions exhibited more control over their learning situations when working together. They requested responses from peers. The time at the Writing

to Learn Centers proved to be very satisfactory and constructive in development of writing purposefully to meet their own needs and to respond to each other.

The fourth desired objective was met by the end of the implementation period. It was documented as achievable and constructive in development of writing to learn in a social setting. The children responded to each other in an approach to acceptance of another's point of view as a positive, helpful review of their work by another, as shown on Table 4.

Table 4

Portfolio Reviewed with Minimum of 1 Person Daily at Writing to Learn Center

Months	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Classroom A	n	n	y	y	y	y	y	y
Classroom B	n	n	n	y	n	y	y	y
Classroom C	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Classroom D	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y
Classroom E	n	y	y	y	y	y	y	y

y = yes n = not yet

Objective Five

By the end of the implementation period, at least eight of ten target third grade children at the practicum site would select, exhibit and share five or more projects from their writing portfolio, and show a gain in positive attitude and interest towards writing. The intent was that participating children would demonstrate a sense of pride and accomplishment through increased writing production and their new found ability developed through understanding that writing can be purposeful, meaningful and exciting.

By the end of the third month of the practicum, children's abilities to select their own writing activities were matched by their eagerness to share the purposes for their choices, as recorded in their individual journals. By the end of the seventh month, their documents were reviewed by the writer, team teacher, observer, and area language arts

adviser. All children in the target population selected, exhibited, and recorded that they had shared at least five writing projects at the school site and community site. This was further documented on the pages of comments by visitors and filed in individual children's portfolios.

Most children at the practicum site felt confident selecting from their portfolios samples of their work to share with their family and neighbors. Their journals documented their positive attitudes about writing. The desire to write improved dramatically during the time of this practicum, which promised an enhanced readiness for more writing. Because of this increased interest and attitude, the children produced more varied forms of writing and showed a marked improvement in the quality of their writing projects. Parents reported noting improvement in the forms of writing and that writing increased for personal and family needs.

At the culmination of the practicum, individual interviews with the target population were scheduled. The children were eager to show why they selected the collection for their portfolios. They were also eager to explain how good they felt as a writer or author. The interviews were based on the district-approved Writing Interest Survey (Quinn, 1989), which was administered to all of the target third grade children. The responses were denoted by one of three choices which indicated the degree of acceptance. By administering the survey on a pre and post survey, the writer was able to document the increased positive attitude toward writing as shown in Tables 5a and Table 5b.

Table 5a

1992 Children's Writing Interest Survey
Do You Like to Write?

	A Lot	A Little	Not At All
Classroom A		4 of 10	2 of 10
Classroom B		5 of 10	1 of 10
Classroom C		5 of 10	2 of 10
Classroom D		4 of 10	3 of 10
Classroom E		5 of 10	1 of 10

Table 5b

1993 Children's Writing Interest Survey
Do You Like to Write?

	A Lot	A Little	Not At All
Classroom A	9 of 10	1 of 10	
Classroom B	8 of 10	2 of 10	
Classroom C	9 of 10	1 of 10	
Classroom D	9 of 10	1 of 10	
Classroom E	8 of 10	2 of 10	

Summary of Results

The writer and speakers gave the teacher participants ideas for continuous assessment and have sufficiently persuaded the teachers of their ability to carry out independently or with others the techniques of continuing assessment. As a result of workshop evaluations, the writer's classroom observation and individual interviews, the writer is also persuaded that the teachers believe in their ability to carry out the techniques of assessment independently or in concert with other teachers at the practicum site. The writer and speakers gave them the tools and techniques required for such assessment. These included portfolios for each student and a disciplined method of collecting, reviewing and discussing materials with children. The workshop interactions provided reasons and methods so that teachers could communicate with parents, convinced that the portfolio assessment approach revealed and documented a child's writing progress in a meaningful way.

During the workshops, the writer provided sample materials and formats, including results from previous programs, which the teachers could use to implement the portfolio assessment approach. Substantive discussions were conducted so that questions and doubts regarding the program could be clarified and resolved to the teacher's satisfaction.

By the end of the workshop sessions the writer observed an enthusiastic acceptance of the principles and teaching format that had been initiated at the practicum site.

Throughout the period of the workshops the writer attended classroom sessions at which the teacher participants were implementing the program.

The writer scheduled classroom visits to observe the implementation of the program and to provide follow up consultation with the teachers.

Teachers were convinced that they had the ability to manage the program within the normal school day. Most teachers felt that this program could be accomplished without undo hardship related to time involvement and that the program apparently was not in conflict with their planned curriculum.

The writer believes that the classroom portfolio format, the development of authentic writing tasks, time management techniques and ongoing communication with students and parents contributed to the eventual acceptance of the program by the teachers as a useful tool for their individual classrooms.

Conclusions

The writer concludes that the non-conventional approach to assessment met the important goals and objectives for both teachers and children in the target population. The participants' responses compiled

from the Workshop Evaluation Forms indicated that the eight month practicum designed by the writer provided the teachers of the targeted third grade children with the appropriate training and encouragement needed to implement the portfolio assessment approach on a daily basis. Through this approach, the teachers were able to develop ways to use the child's writing to communicate to the child and their parents the child's progress and the child's additional instructional needs.

The response from the teachers attending the practicum was unanimously favorable. They showed a high level of interest, moving from some skepticism about the extra time they assumed would be required, to gradually understanding that familiarity with the process would enable them to embrace a "new system of assessment." Indeed, some admitted to enjoying a real sense of confidence in gaining new and better insights to the children's writing development.

The workshops increased the teachers' knowledge of writing pedagogy and improved their abilities to assess children's writing. The writer identified both functional and expressive writing activities suitable for ongoing assessment and inclusion in the child's portfolio.

The preceding chapters state in detail how the process of portfolio assessment approach was organized in collaboration with school site teachers and then introduced in the classrooms and put into daily practice. The teachers' enthusiastic participation throughout the sessions was expressed as motivation in the classrooms. During the course of the practicum, this enthusiasm for the ideas and goals

explained to the teachers correlated well with the significant development and growth of reading and writing abilities observed in the targeted student population.

The workshops prepared the teachers by showing them how to combine ongoing writing activities with use of the child's learning strengths, special talents, and learning styles as a means of documenting and communicating progress of the child's abilities. This assessment technique prepared the teachers to properly administer ongoing individualized instructional changes through development and collection of an individual portfolio of the child's actual work production. The individual child conference and his portfolio of writing activities were recognized by the teachers as valuable time for a daily teacher directed lesson. It was the time to encourage and document the child's unique learning strengths, talents, nuances and creative writing abilities. The teachers used this time to assist children to select activities from the subjects of the curriculum that lend themselves to being described in writing and to reflect on the purpose for their writing choices. The heightened interest, enthusiasm and sense of accomplishment of the children was evident as they worked with the teacher and with their group in developing their writing skills.

Because interactive development was a key to the program's success, there were many opportunities for children to motivate and help each other at the Writing to Learn Centers. The interaction promoted a sense of purpose and provided the opportunity for experiencing the

routine of writing in a non-judgmental classroom climate. In their collection of writings, the children exhibited a positive attitude about themselves which increased their desire to write. Their increased confidence allowed them to write more and attempt new and unfamiliar types of writing while engaged in daily writing activities. Teachers indicated through documentation that daily writing became more familiar and also became an automatic response by the children when they studied different subjects during the day. They reported that the children often asked to be given the opportunity to write about the subjects they studied so that they could include personal and cultural information about their home and their community in their writings. They also asked to use the Writing to Learn Center to express their understanding of the use of different kinds of writing. The variety of writing activities selected by the teachers and students became measures of the student's ongoing progress, while the variety of activities provided several different measures of writing abilities, accomplishments, and achievements.

The practicum provided experiences for teachers to develop a knowledge and understanding of a clear and positive way of reporting to a child and his parent the child's progress in written language and the writing process. The portfolio assessment approach became a useful tool that bridged the classroom experience between the teacher, the child and the parent. It helped the parents understand their child's potential for learning and helped them view the portfolio as a collection

of experiences, such that they enjoyed reviewing different kinds of writing in their child's portfolio.

When the purpose of the portfolio was explained to the parents and when they became aware of the goals which were both functional and expressive forms of writing, they were able to see the advantages of the portfolio approach. They began to participate in their child's daily home writing activities. The participatory exercises that were sent home were skillfully designed by the teachers to engage the parents in writing activities which helped the parents understand the writing skills, subjects, interests, and motivation of their child. As a result, parents have requested additional writing exercises in which they could participate. Although the long term benefits of a portfolio assessment approach have yet to be realized, even in the short time of this practicum, there were strong indications that portfolio assessment was a very effective approach.

Recommendations

The writer recommends that training workshops for teachers be instituted as a vital component in the writing portion of the curriculum. Teachers would be trained to focus on the strengths of the child and the entire portfolio as a variety of writing activities rather than on a single piece. When plans are formulated for the following school year, provisions should be made for the workshops to be held at the beginning of the school year, dependent on the school site, so that beneficial

routines involving home and school writing activities and portfolio review will be established early in the school year.

Parent workshops and group conferences specifically on activities that will help the parent/caregiver work with the child at home relate directly to the child's success at school. Teachers would describe by word and pictures home activities that provide writing experiences for children and that introduce informally the functions and forms of writing used at home, at school and in the community. The workshop and parent conferences would also serve to acquaint parents with what the writer and the program intend to accomplish both at school and in the home.

At the parent workshops, teachers will demonstrate how ongoing writing activities in the home can support a child's interest, motivation and success in all aspects of the writing curriculum.

The community will be encouraged to be involved in the preparation of a children's writers fair at community corporate centers. The involvement of teachers, students, family, caregivers and the community during the school year can be celebrated by and culminate in a writer's fair, where the students can display and share their literary activities, accomplished during the year.

Dissemination

When the writer reported her results and recommendations to the full school site staff, several of the teachers who had not participated in

the workshops expressed a reluctance to take on the daily program, given the current time constraints and lack of adult classroom assistance.

This expressed attitude was similar to that of the workshop participants when they began the program. When they became more familiar with the complete program, the workshop participants recognized the manageability of the program within the existing conditions, and that the concept itself was a better way to assess student progress and achievement. The non-participant teachers and staff were generally impressed with the children's portfolios displaying varied kinds of writing in many stages of the writing process.

The workshop teachers stated that until one was actually exposed to the mechanics of the program, it was difficult to accept that it could be implemented successfully within classroom time. The staff then gave general approval and a commitment to implementation of the program in all grades within the next year.

The writer and workshop participants planned district-based inservices for two school sites and PTA groups to advance the portfolio assessment approach. The writer will make copies of the project available in the district and county media centers.

The writer presented an analysis of the current literature on the subject of literacy instruction and how that instruction could be keyed to a portfolio assessment using the writer's practicum. The presentation was made to new teachers at the state university.

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